

CIT Newsletter

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE HOUSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT'S CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAM (CIT)

Volume 6—Year 2004

CIT Officer Roy Haney Receives Chief of Police Commendation

Officer Roy Haney, Southeast Division, received a Chief of Police Commendation after he volunteered for a CIT call involving a "woman with a pistol." Upon arriving to the call, Officer Haney found the woman holding a pistol threatening to kill herself. Officer Haney placed himself in a tactically safe position behind a van approximately 15 yards from the woman. He immediately started communicating with the woman in a calm, reassuring voice even though the woman was cursing and repeatedly telling Officer Haney to kill her. Officer Haney persisted in reassuring the woman and actively listening amid the profanities and emotional outbursts. After about 30

minutes, the woman finally responded, telling Officer Haney she no longer cared about what happened to her and that she was ready to die. Officer Haney continued reassuring the woman that no officer on the scene wanted to harm her and that they wanted to get her the help she needed. He asked her several times to throw her weapon into the street so the officers could help her. The woman became agitated on several occasions and told Officer Haney to leave. Haney continued to reassure the woman and told her he was not leaving until she got the help she needed. Haney told the woman she could tell him whatever she wanted and that he would listen. Because he



*CIT Officer Roy Haney
Southeast Division*

was behind cover, had other officers covering him, and thought it would be a detriment to his efforts to communicate, Officer Haney kept his firearm holstered. Officer Haney bravely showed the woman by his words, actions, and

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Citizen's Efforts Lead to Change in TCLEOSE Peace Officer Curriculum

Patsy Gillham is an advocate for Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training for law enforcement personnel. Her efforts have resulted in a significant change in the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education (TCLEOSE) Basic Peace Officer curriculum. Starting in January 2005,

all individuals becoming Texas peace officers will receive 16 hours of basic CIT training based on Houston's program.

Ms. Gillham became interested in this issue after the unfortunate shooting of her nephew, who was mentally ill, by law enforcement officers in a community south of Houston. Ms.

Gillham learned of Houston's CIT program and became one of its biggest supporters. She literally has driven across the state talking to TCLEOSE commissioners and state legislators about the need to provide CIT training to all Texas law enforcement personnel.

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Message From Police Chief Hurtt



Harold L. Hurtt
Chief of Police

The Importance of Crisis Intervention Training

Several members of our community have taken the time to tell me of their support for our Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program. This program is truly making a positive difference in our community and it is greatly appreciated by mental health consumers, their families, mental health professionals, and the community at large. I have heard several stories of the commendable work you—the CIT officers—are doing on a daily basis. I appreciate your hard work and commitment to helping those less fortunate than us.

The CIT program is continuing to gain in popularity and importance across the state and the nation. A significant development has recently occurred in the state. The Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education (TCLEOSE) Commissioners have voted to include CIT training in the Texas Basic Peace Officer Curriculum. TCLEOSE is not aware of any other state law enforcement licensing agency that has mandated this type of training. Starting in January 2005, every new Texas peace officer will receive 16 hours of basic CIT training. To gauge support for this decision, TCLEOSE sent surveys to every law enforcement agency in the state asking if the agency supported the inclusion of CIT training in the basic curriculum. Ninety percent of the respondents stated they supported this training.

Research conducted by TCLEOSE revealed that 51% of all tasks identified for Texas peace officers have the direct potential of requiring crisis intervention skills. The CIT training helps in these situations. It is a tested and proven program that helps officers respond to individuals in serious mental health crises. Additionally, the CIT tactics and techniques are directly applicable in almost any

situation an officer finds him or herself in (domestic violence, intoxicated individuals, emotionally distressed individuals, writing traffic tickets, etc.). The focus of CIT is communication, a skill used by officers in any situation they find themselves in.

TCLEOSE has asked the Houston Police Department to chair the committee that will develop this new curriculum. We will also be providing “train the trainer” classes for academy trainers from across the state. This is a significant development that affects the whole state and is based on the success of our CIT program.

The CIT program continues to gain attention and support nationally as well. The Technical Assistance and Policy Analysis Center for Jail Diversion recently published a monograph titled *A Guide to Implementing Police-Based Diversion Programs for People with Mental Illness*. The monograph lists 28 law enforcement agencies with specialized responses to individuals with mental illness. Of the 28, 22 agencies (79%) utilize the CIT model. Increasingly, law enforcement agencies across the nation are implementing the CIT program. One such agency is the Chicago (IL) Police Department, the second largest municipal police department in the nation. Chicago is in the process of starting a CIT program and has consulted with us.

Our CIT program is the largest in the nation and has become the model for the state and one of the models for the nation. You—the CIT officers—are the primary reason for our success. You do a commendable job handling these very difficult situations. You respond with patience, compassion, and knowledge. You are making a positive difference. Keep up the good work. ♦

CIT Officer Therman Canton Talks Man Out of Committing Suicide

Officer Therman Canton of the Southwest Division, responded to a suicide in progress call involving a man standing on the roof of his two-story residence with a rope tied around his neck. The distraught man would not communicate with paramedics who were on the scene. The individual had a drug problem and was tired of the mental and financial stress the drug habit was causing him and his family. The individual was intent on killing himself.

Officer Canton climbed up on the roof and, keeping a safe distance, attempted to communicate with the individual. In a calm, caring manner Officer Canton reassured the individual that he, Officer Canton, was there to help and had a sincere concern for his life. Officer Canton empathized with the individual, asked questions, and actively listened. The individual finally opened up to Officer Canton. After talk-



**CIT Officer
Therman Canton
Southwest Division**

ing for approximately 30 minutes, the individual agreed to give up his suicide plan and seek professional help. Officer Canton took the individual to the NeuroPsychiatric Center for emergency psychiatric evaluation and treatment.

Channel 2 News learned of the intervention and later interviewed Officer Canton and the individual. During that

"We truly believe a miracle happened that day and I know for a fact God used you."

- ***Letter to Officer Canton From Mother of Suicidal Man***

in-
terview, the individual thanked Officer Canton for saving his life. The individual's mother wrote a letter to Officer Canton with her sincere appreciation for all that he did for her son. She believed a miracle happened that day and that Officer Canton was used by God to help her son. The mother mentioned in the letter that her son was "doing fantastic." ♦

CIT Officer Jared Sorensen Commended for Helping Woman Needing Hospitalization

CIT Officer Jared Sorensen of the Fondren Division, responded to a call involving a woman with bipolar disorder who had not been taking her medications and was in need of hospitalization. The woman was taken to West Oaks Hospital by her husband, on her doctor's orders, but the husband could not get his wife to agree to be admitted. The hospital called for a CIT unit to respond and Officer Sorensen responded to the call.

Upon arriving at the scene, Officer Sorensen found the woman to be somewhat quiet but also agitated. She would "pull back" when her husband tried to get her to do anything. After approximately 15 minutes, Officer Sorensen was able to talk her into going to the NeuroPsychiatric Center (NPC) with him. Sorensen stated that his CIT training helped him in this situation. Sorensen stated that by being patient, speaking in a calm tone of voice, empathizing with the woman, and reassuring her, he was able to connect with her and persuade her to go with him for help.

Sorensen allowed the husband to ride with his wife in the patrol car to the NPC, which helped because the woman had never been to the NPC and was apprehensive about going there. Officer Sorensen later drove the husband back to West Oaks Hospital to pick up his vehicle.

The husband was impressed with Officer Sorensen's professionalism, his knowledge of mental illness, and his ability to communicate with and calm his wife. The husband took the time to call the Fondren station to commend Officer Sorensen for his assistance. ♦



**CIT Officer
Jared Sorensen
Fondren Division**

CIT Officer Manuel Cruz Talks Knife-Wielding Man Out of Killing Self

Officer Manuel Cruz of the Southeast Division, received a call to check by a scene involving a man with a knife who was threatening to kill himself. Officer Cruz received the call because of his status as a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) officer. When Officer Cruz arrived, he found the man standing on the roof of his house holding a kitchen knife, threatening to kill himself, and also goading the police to kill him. The man, who was speaking mostly in Spanish, kept saying he did not want to live anymore and said he has been trying to kill himself for the last six years but was unable to "do it right." He had small fresh cuts on his wrists. The man, who was intoxicated, was agitated and cursing at the officers.

Fortunately, Officer Cruz speaks Spanish. Cruz kept a safe distance, remained on the ground, and initiated communication. Cruz, speaking in Spanish, asked if the man had any children. He stated he had three. Cruz focused on

the children and the fact that the children would lose their father if the subject killed himself. Officer Cruz empathized with the individual, kept reassuring him that he could get help for his problems, and was successful in talking the man into dropping the knife and coming down from the roof. Officer Cruz transported the individual to the NeuroPsychiatric Center for emergency psychiatric evaluation and treatment.

Officer Cruz stated that he is very confident responding to CIT calls since taking the CIT training. As he responds to a call, he visualizes successfully interacting with the individual in crisis and successfully utilizing the intervention tactics and techniques taught in the training. ♦



**CIT Officer
Manuel Cruz
Southeast Division**

Man Tries to Kill Self by Running Into Busy, Mid-Morning Traffic on the Gulf Freeway

A distraught, suicidal man who was visiting his therapist's office suddenly ran from a group therapy session and attempted to jump down the office atrium from the fourth floor. Personnel from the therapist's office managed to restrain the individual but he broke away from them and ran out of the office building. The individual ran to the shoulder of the Gulf Freeway where he appeared to be ready to run into the fast-moving mid-morning traffic. A 9-1-1 call was immediately made.

Officer R. J. Howell and CIT Officer P. A. Shaffer, both with the Clear Lake Division, happened to be adjacent to the location when the call went over the radio. Upon arriving at the scene, the officers found the individual kneeling down on the shoulder of the freeway, appearing to be praying, and looking into the traffic. The officers blocked off the service road with their patrol car and Officer Howell started blocking off the traffic on the freeway as Officer Shaffer slowly approached the individual.



**CIT Officer
Phillip Shaffer
Clear Lake
Division**

Suddenly, the subject ran into the traffic with Officer Shaffer in pursuit. An 18-wheel truck locked its brakes and swerved missing the individual by inches. The tires of the jackknifed truck were smoking profusely. Cars and trucks were skidding and stopping all around the individual and Officer Shaffer. Miraculously, no motor vehicle accidents occurred and no injuries were sustained by the individual or Officer Shaffer. Officers Howell and Shaffer reached the individual and were able to subdue him. The individual was transported to the NeuroPsychiatric Center for emergency psychiatric evaluation.

It was later learned that the subject was involved in a plant explosion and suffers from intense pain to his arm and back. He attends daily counseling sessions to cope with the pain but became mentally tired and wanted to end the pain. In addition, he is being treated for bipolar disorder. ♦



**Officer
Randy Howell
Clear Lake
Division**

CIT Officer Roy Haney Receives Chief of Police Commendation *(Continued from front page)*

demeanor that he was not a threat to her and that he wanted to help her. These actions ultimately created a bond of trust between Officer Haney and the woman that eventually led to her surrender.

“The CIT training was a great help. For the first 15 minutes, the woman cussed us out and kept telling us to kill her. The training helped me to be patient and persistent and to realize it was the illness speaking, not the person.”

• **Officer Roy Haney**

The Houston Police Department’s Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team arrived on the scene and their supervisors noted that Officer Haney was effectively com-

municating with the woman. They advised Haney to continue his intervention while they took tactical positions. Officer Haney kept the woman calm by continuously reassuring her and explaining that the changes going on around them—streetlights turning off, vehicles moving, officers getting in position—were to keep the situation safe, not to harm her. Officer Haney’s patience and persistence paid off. After two and one half hours, the woman, without warning, threw her pistol to the ground and surrendered. The SWAT team safely took her into custody and Officer Haney went to her, reassuring her that she was safe and had done the right thing. Haney accompanied the woman to the hospital and stayed with her through the admitting process. ♦

NOTE: The information for this article was taken from a letter of commendation for Officer Haney written by Officer M. M. Pierson who was with Officer Haney during this response. Officer Haney was Officer Pierson’s field training officer.

Citizen’s Efforts Lead to Change in TCLEOSE Peace Officer Curriculum *(Continued from front page)*

Ms. Gillham’s journey started in September 2002 when she learned of a presentation Officer Frank Webb, coordinator of Houston’s CIT program, was giving to law enforcement training coordinators at a conference in Corpus Christi. Ms. Gillham called Officer Webb and asked if she could have five minutes of his presentation time to speak of the incident involving her nephew and her support of Houston’s CIT training. Patsy made the trip at her own expense and gave a very impassioned, heart rending presentation that was received very favorably.

At the time, Patsy knew nothing about TCLEOSE or state law enforcement training requirements. She only knew, from the incident with her nephew, that CIT training was needed.

Patsy spoke with several law enforcement personnel at the training coordinators’ meeting and educated herself about TCLEOSE. In the following two years, Patsy worked hard at her own time and expense to advocate for de-escalation/communication training as taught in the CIT curriculum to be included in the TCLEOSE pre service and in-service curricula. She drove to TCLEOSE commissioners’ meetings across the state (Bandera, Austin, Tyler,

and Conroe), met with members of the House Committee on Law Enforcement, and worked with the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill Texas.

In March of this year, the TCLEOSE commissioners voted to include CIT training in the Basic Peace Officer curriculum. This is a significant development that impacts

“Patsy Gillham is a perfect example of the difference one person can make. She has effected significant change in law enforcement in the state of Texas.”

• **Gary M. Swindle, Chief of Police
Tyler Police Department
TCLEOSE Commissioner**

the state of Texas and shows what one person can do given the will and determination. Patsy’s job is not over, however. Her next goal is to get CIT de-escalation training included in the TCLEOSE mandatory biennial in-service training that will affect veteran Texas peace officers. ♦

Houston Included in Monograph on Police-Based Diversion Programs for People With Mental Illness

The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) and the Technical Assistance and Policy Analysis (TAPA) Center for Jail Diversion recently published a monograph titled: *A Guide to Implementing Police-Based Diversion Programs for People with Mental Illness*. The document has four chapters. The first chapter introduces the problem. It includes charts summarizing the specialized responses of 28 law enforcement agencies from across the nation. Houston is included in these charts. The second chapter discusses the different types of programs employed across the nation and the components of each. Chapter three provides the steps necessary to implement a program and the resulting benefits. Chapter four provides helpful suggestions from agencies that have developed these programs.

The following is material from each chapter.

1 The Problem.

Deinstitutionalization, inadequate or inaccessible community mental health services, and stringent involuntary commitment criteria are at least partly responsible for the “criminalization” of the mentally ill. [1]

While police responses to individuals in serious mental health crises are not the *most* numerous calls, they are significant in number, are increasing in number, and they take time to resolve.

74

The average number of minutes spent on mental health calls. Data from an analysis of 60 mental health calls received by a suburban Colorado police department. [2]

45%

The percentage of agencies with a specialized response for people with mental illness. From a survey of 174 cities with populations of 100,000 or more. [3]

79%

The percentage of agencies utilizing the CIT model in a survey by PERF of 28 agencies utilizing some type of specialized response to individuals with mental illness. [4]

13

The average number of hours of specialized mental illness training provided to new recruits in the academy from a PERF survey of 28 agencies utilizing some type of specialized response to individuals with mental illness. [5]

89%

The percentage of agencies providing specialized mental health training to new recruits in the academy from a PERF survey of 28 agencies utilizing some type of specialized response to individuals with mental illness. [6]

5

The average number of hours of specialized mental health training provided to all patrol officers from a PERF survey of 28 agencies utilizing some type of specialized response to individuals with mental illness. [7]

68%

The percentage of agencies providing specialized mental health training to all patrol personnel from a PERF survey of 28 agencies utilizing some type of specialized response to individuals with mental illness. [8]

46%

The percentage of agencies providing specialized training to call takers/dispatchers from a PERF survey of 28 agencies utilizing some type of specialized response to individuals with mental illness. [9]

2 Specialized Models.

“... a single point of entry, a no refusal policy, and streamlined intake for police” were identified as critical features of mental health services that need to be available to law enforcement in order to have a successful specialized police response to individuals in mental health crises. [10]

Correctly identifying calls that involve people with mental illness is a problem for many agencies. There are complicating factors, such as calls coming in from the 911 system as disorderly conduct or domestic violence calls, that make it difficult for the call takers. Less than half of the agencies surveyed by PERF in their survey of 28 agencies with some type of specialized response provided training to the call takers/dispatchers. Of the agencies that did provide training, the training varied from 4 hours to 40 hours.

One way to facilitate dispatch regarding these calls is to track locations that are repeatedly the scene of incidents with someone who is mentally ill.

(continued on next page)

“Many agencies flag all locations where there is a concern about dangerousness, often called a ‘hazard’ location.”

“Several agencies, including Athens-Clarke County, Georgia, and Florence, Alabama, flag all call locations involving mental illness.”

3 Planning a Program.

“A tragic incident involving a person with mental illness often preceded the decision by law enforcement agencies to change their response to people with mental illness.”

“Another frequent program impetus was the realization that police were increasingly encountering people with mental illness.”

46%

The percentage of agencies citing a tragic incident involving a person with mental illness as the main impetus for developing their specialized police response program in a survey of 28 agencies with a specialized response. [11]

The

Houston Police Department’s CIT Program has become one of the model programs in the nation as indicated in PERF’s survey: “The Memphis CIT model, or agencies that had adapted the Memphis model, such as Albuquerque, Seattle, and San Diego, often guided program development. Other agencies also investigated programs in **Houston**, Los Angeles, and Long Beach.”

4 Operational Lessons

Learned.

Overcoming mutual distrust between police and the mental health community was often a significant challenge for the agencies PERF surveyed. Fostering a close relationship between the law enforcement agency and the mental health community was critical to the success of the agency’s specialized response.

Many agencies have a selection or screening process for CIT officers. The selection process typically includes an interview with the prospective officer, which may include an assessment of the officer’s knowledge of mental illness, a review of the officer’s job performance, a discussion with the officer’s supervisor, the level of education attained by the officer, and the officer’s patrol experience. In Kansas City, members of the mental health community participate in these interviews.

“Survey respondents repeatedly mentioned communication skills, including active listening and effective interviewing skills, as key qualities for CIT officers. These skills are essential to an officer’s ability to de-escalate a crisis situation. The ability to ‘consciously display a demeanor that shows caring and concern rather than one that is authoritarian,’ being observant, and recognizing subtle behaviors are also essential skills to de-escalating crises.”

“The ability to slow down the traditional police response is also important.”

“Creativity, flexibility, open-mindedness, and respect for the dignity of people with mental illness are other important qualities identified by survey respondents.”

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ENDNOTES

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For copies of this document, contact Jason Cheney at 202-454-8331 (jcheney@policeforum.org).

The Tyler (TX) Police Department Starts CIT Program Based on Houston's Model

Four classified officers from the Tyler (TX) Police Department attended the Houston Police Department's 40-hour CIT class in August 2003. The officers attended the training so they could become the CIT trainers for their department. Tyler's chief, Gary M. Swindle, is a strong advocate of the program.

The Tyler Police Department held its first CIT class in March 2004. Sixteen officers and two dispatchers attended. Mr. Jack Callahan of Advocacy, Inc. and Officer Frank Webb, Houston's CIT Coordinator, were invited to speak on the first day of the class. Mr. Callahan talked about mental illness, his personal experiences with the disease, the lack of mental health resources in the state, and legal aspects of responding to individuals in serious mental health crises. Officer Webb talked about the history of the CIT program, how it was developed in Houston, how it has been received in the department and the community, and program statistics. Both presentations were received very favorably.

Sergeant Terry Morrow of the Tyler Police Department, is the coordinator of Tyler's CIT training. He stated that Mr. Callahan's presentation was one of the highlights of the class. He commented on Jack's ability to communicate and connect with the officers. Sergeant Morrow stated that what made the biggest impression among the officers was Mr. Callahan's discussion of his personal experience with a Houston police officer when Jack was ill and on the



Mr. Jack Callahan, of Advocacy, Inc., talks to the first class of Tyler Police Department CIT officers about mental illness.

streets of Houston. Jack spoke of how the officer knelt down to be at Jack's eye level, used Jack's name, and spoke in a compassionate, respectful, caring manner. The officer connected with Jack and took him to the hospital for treatment. That interaction and the subsequent intervention at the hospital were the start of Jack's road to recovery. ♦

About the Tyler Police Department

From 1846 to 1909, law enforcement for the City of Tyler was primarily provided by Federal Marshals. In 1909, the city hired its first police officer. That officer became Tyler's first Chief of Police in 1916. To date, the City of Tyler has had just nine police chiefs.

In 1995, the Tyler Police Department became a fully accredited police department. Of approximately 18,000 police departments nationwide, there are about 450 agencies that have achieved this level of police professionalism. Accreditation provides objective evidence of an agency's commitment to excellence in leadership, resource management, and service delivery. It also embodies the precepts of community-oriented policing.

The Tyler Police Department has 175 sworn person-

nel. The city is divided into districts. Each district is commanded by a deputy chief and is staffed with a lieutenant, sergeants, beat officers, investigators, a crime prevention officer, and a public service officer. Each district is divided into beats and each beat is assigned a daytime officer and an evening officer. This concept provides 24-hour coverage and offers citizens an opportunity to get to know their beat officers. There is extensive involvement with the community such as Neighborhood Crimewatches, Citizen Police Academies, Cultural Awareness Training, District Community Meetings, and school programs. Tyler also has initiated an Explorer Program in conjunction with the Boy Scouts of America and formed their own Police Academy in conjunction with Tyler Junior College. ♦



Did You Know ...

Abraham Lincoln, the revered 16th President of the United States, suffered from severe and incapacitating **depression** that occasionally led to thoughts of suicide.

Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister during WW II, had **bipolar** disorder and clinical **depression**.

Charles Dickens, one of the greatest authors of the English language, suffered from clinical **depression**.

Patty Duke, the award-winning actress, has **bipolar** disorder and talks about it in her autobiography *Call Me Anna*.

Ernest Hemingway, the Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist, suffered from **depression**.

Ludwig van Beethoven, the brilliant German musical composer, experienced **bipolar** disorder.

Kristy McNichol, the actress (television sitcoms “Family” and “Empty Nest”), has **bipolar** disorder.

Buzz Aldrin, the astronaut and co-pilot of the Apollo 11 mission and the second man to walk on the moon, has clinical **depression** which he writes about in his book *Return to Earth* written with Wayne Warga (1973).

Earl Campbell, considered one of the most powerful running backs in NFL history, was diagnosed with **panic** and **anxiety disorder** in 1989. You can read about his experience with mental illness in his book *The Earl Campbell Story: A Football Great's Battle with Panic Disorder* written by Earl Campbell and John Ruane (1999).

Ted Turner, founder of CNN and former vice-chairman of AOL Time Warner, has **bipolar** disorder.

Mike Wallace of CBS News' *60 Minutes* and comedian and actor **Drew Carey** have **depression**.

The *CIT Newsletter* is a clearinghouse of information regarding the Houston Police Department's Crisis Intervention Team. The *CIT Newsletter* does not endorse products or manufacturers. While the information in this publication has been prepared from sources considered reliable, the *CIT Newsletter* does not guarantee its accuracy or completeness. The authors, editors, advisors, and department accept no liability resulting from the application or adoption of any of the procedures, tactics, or recommendations presented or implied in this publication. The CIT Newsletter is published through the

Miscellaneous News ...

Group From Fairfax County (VA) Visit to Learn About Houston's CIT Program

Four representatives from the Fairfax County, Virginia Police Department visited the Houston Police Department in June 2004 to learn about Houston's CIT program. Members of the group were: Major Tom Ryan, Lieutenant Mike Kline, Officer Laura Zambron, and Police Dispatcher Jacki Gregas.

The group toured the NeuroPsychiatric Center (NPC) and attended a CIT Refresher in-service class. They were very impressed with the NPC and all other aspects of our program. They intend to replicate our program with little, if any, revision.

Of particular interest was the NPC. It takes officers in Fairfax

County an average of four to six hours to obtain an emergency detention order.

Lieutenant From the Chicago (IL) Police Department Scheduled to Visit Houston

The Chicago, Illinois Police Department is in the process of starting a CIT program. Lieutenant Jeff Murphy is scheduled to visit the Houston Police Department to learn about the CIT program. Chicago is the second largest municipal police department in the nation with over 13,000 sworn/exempt personnel.

Houston Provides CIT Training to School District and College/University Police Departments

Chief Hurtt approved a request by William J. Harness, Chief of Police of the Conroe Independent School District Police Department, to provide CIT training to his officers and personnel from other regional school district and college/university police departments. The training took place in July 2004. Summer is an opportune time for training school district personnel as it is difficult for them to attend week-long sessions during the school year. In addition to Conroe ISD, personnel from the following schools and law enforcement agencies attended the training: Aldine ISD, University of Texas—Houston, Rice University, University of Houston, Houston Baptist University, Brazoria County Sheriff's Office, and the Pearland and Alvin police departments. ♦

Officer Receives "Certificate of Merit" From Community for Talking Person Out of Committing Suicide

Senior Police Officer Michael R. Edwards, of the Central Division, recently received a "Certificate of Merit" from the community he patrols for talking a man out of committing suicide. Officer Edwards, a CIT officer, responded to a man who was standing on the edge of a freeway overpass bridge threatening to jump off. The man was despondent over a domestic dispute and was ready to end his life. Officer Edwards spoke to the individual for approximately 30 minutes and succeeded in talking him out of jumping. Officer Edwards then took the individual to the NeuroPsychiatric Center for emergency psychiatric evaluation and treatment.

This was not the first time Officer Edwards has saved a life. He talked two other individuals out of committing suicide on previous CIT calls.

Officer Edwards credits his CIT training with helping him through these difficult and tense situations. Edwards stated he has been able to "connect" with the individuals in these situations by actively listening, being patient, being empathic, convincing the individuals he was there to help, and talking about resources that were available to assist these individuals in their time of need. ♦



*CIT Officer
Michael Edwards
Central Division*

Supervisor Commends CIT Officer Martha Sanchez and the CIT Program

Sergeant R. W. Mascheck of the Fondren Division, wrote a letter commending the actions of CIT Officer Martha Sanchez on a recent call. Sergeant Mascheck also voiced his appreciation for the CIT program, which he said was making a positive difference.



**CIT Officer
Martha Sanchez
Fondren Division**

The incident he wrote about involved a “Suspicious Person/Intoxicated Male” call. The manager of a nightclub saw the “suspect” drive up to the club in a car with two wheels that had no tires on them, just the rims. The “suspect” entered the nightclub and appeared intoxicated, emotional, and disoriented. The manager asked for the “suspect’s” keys and told him to sit down. The manager then called the police.

Officer Sanchez responded and found the “suspect” to be intoxicated but, from her CIT training, felt there was something else wrong with him. Sanchez started asking the individual questions. Sanchez first asked the “suspect” if he were taking any medications. He gave the names of some medications he had been prescribed. Officer Sanchez recognized these as psychotropic medications and inquired about any psychological problems he might be experiencing. The “suspect” suddenly started crying. Officer Sanchez discerned that the “suspect” was depressed and had other psychological issues. The “suspect” later admitted he has mental illness and is having difficulty coping with it, and said he drinks alcohol to get his mind off of his depression.

The individual’s mother was called to the scene. She

confirmed that her son has mental illness and has been struggling with it for the past 20 years. The mother further stated that her son had attempted suicide just two months previous. The family, who lives in a city adjacent to Houston, has called the police for assistance on several occasions over the past 20 years. On each occasion, the family was told by the officers that there was nothing the police could do. The family had all but given up hope.

The mother was concerned that her son would be arrested for public intoxication, as had been the case in the past. Officer Sanchez explained that she was not going to arrest her son and that it would be more appropriate to take her son for emergency mental health treatment. The mother was ecstatic. She was very appreciative of Offi-

“The family was very thankful to the Houston Police Department for our services and our CIT program.”

• ***Sergeant R. W. Mascheck
Fondren Division***

cer Sanchez’s concern for her son and very impressed with Officer Sanchez’s knowledge of mental illness, her patience, and her empathy. The mother referred to Officer Sanchez as an “angel” and was very thankful to the Houston Police Department for having a program like CIT.

Officer Sanchez transported the individual to West Oaks Hospital. The mother followed and the paperwork for an emergency detention order was completed. ♦

New 18-Bed Crisis Residential Unit Opens

A new 18-bed residential crisis unit opened on May 3, 2004. The facility, located at 1301 Dennis Street, is financed by Harris County Commissioners’ Court and managed by the Mental Health Mental Retardation Authority of Harris County. Individuals diagnosed with psychiatric disorders, and also those with a dual diagnosis of substance abuse, live at the facility for 10 to 30 days and receive intensive, individual, daily therapy and psychiatric rehabilitation. The facility is staffed 24-hours-a-day with

trained mental health professionals. The program is managed by Ms. Mende Snodgrass, Director of Psychiatric Emergency Crisis Residential Services.

We are fortunate to have a commissioners’ court that is supportive of mental health. In addition to this program, Harris County Commissioners’ Court is funding the Mobile Crisis Outreach Team, the Crisis Hotline at the Neuro-Psychiatric Center, and a major portion of the Neuro-Psychiatric Center’s budget. ♦

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Houston Police Department Chairs TCLEOSE Basic Peace Officer CIT Committee

As mentioned in the article on the front cover of this issue, the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education (TCLEOSE) Commissioners have voted to include Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training in the Texas Basic Peace Officer Course starting in January 2005. Once this change takes effect, every new peace officer in the state will receive basic CIT training.

The Houston Police Department has become the leader in the state regarding the CIT program. Because of this, TCLEOSE has appointed the coordinator of Houston's CIT program, Officer Frank Webb of the Training Division, to chair the committee that will develop the CIT curriculum for the Basic Peace Officer Course. As chair, Officer Webb was tasked with assembling five to six subject matter experts for his committee that fairly represent the geographic areas of the state. Of primary concern to Officer Webb was the representation of different sized agen-

cies as they have different concerns and needs. Officer Webb also wanted representation from the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI), one of the staunchest advocates of the CIT program.

Serving on Officer Webb's committee are the following people: Sergeant Todd Smith of the Austin (TX) Police Department; Sergeant Terry Morrow of the Tyler (TX) Police Department; Ms. Frances Wise, Director, National Alliance for the Mentally Ill San Antonio; Mr. Michael Kane, Chairperson, Protective Services Division, Coastal Bend College; and Sheriff Joe Pollock, Burnett County Sheriff's Office.

The committee held its first meeting in May 2004 at TCLEOSE headquarters in Austin.

The committee voted on 16 hours of basic CIT training and is in the process of developing the lesson plan, instructional materials, videos, and test questions for this new block of instruction. ♦

